

Stavert, Zigomala & Co

Stavert, Zigomala & Co. was a 'merchant-converter' firm based in Manchester. This meant that they traded cotton piece goods that they produced themselves. The Museum's collections include fabric samples, printing blocks, advertising material, ledgers and correspondence relating to the company.

John Copeland Zigomala was born in Greece in 1816. After the massacre of Scio in 1821 he was orphaned. An American businessman named Mr. Copeland rescued him and took him back to America, where John Zigomala received his education and training. He incorporated 'Copeland' into his name as a mark of respect and gratitude. John Zigomala started his business career in America, then moved to Glasgow and finally relocated to Manchester. William Stavert, originally from Scotland, worked as an accountant at 1 Piccadilly in Manchester. The partnership was established in about 1837. The firm's offices were at 101 Portland Street and then 6 Minshull Street. Both men were well respected as businessmen and the Stavert, Zigomala brand became regarded as a high-quality product.

The Cooper family became involved with Stavert, Zigomala & Co. in the 1860s. The first of the Cooper family to work with the firm was John Cooper. He worked his way up through the company to the position of company director. The eldest son of each generation of the Cooper family since also worked for Stavert, Zigomala and became either company directors or partners, the last being Myles Cooper.



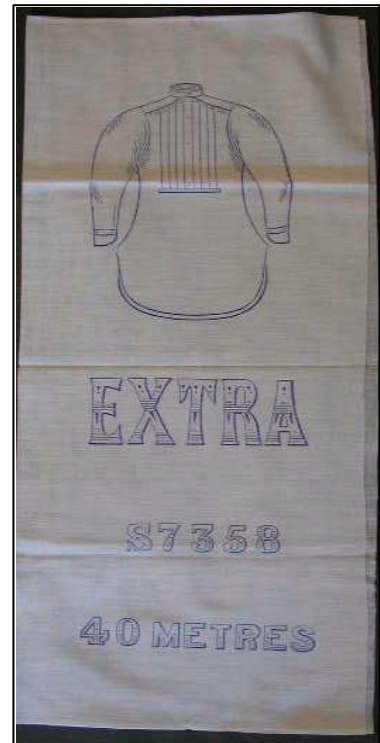
Printing block used to mark cloth destined for Havana, Cuba.

The two most popular of the Stavert, Zigomala fabrics were known as 'Piccadilly Drill' and 'Stavert Drill'. They were versatile fabrics. For example, the same cloth that was used to make tram drivers' uniforms in Cuba was used by the Cooper family themselves as picnic blankets.

After the Second World War, the cotton industry was expected to bounce back to previous levels of production. However, this was not the case and Stavert, Zigomala's business suffered. Myles Cooper sent one of his employees, Eric Duff, on a world-wide business trip in an attempt to regain some of the lost trade they had suffered. However, this brought only limited success with one or two individual businesses in Ceylon and Auckland. Large-scale trade proved difficult to find. Business gradually declined through the 1950s owing to the development of cotton industries in Eastern and Third World countries. Stavert, Zigomala lost its last remaining and most important market as a result of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The new Cuban government introduced protectionist economic policies and the United States responded with a trade embargo.

Stavert, Zigomala downsized its business, moving to smaller rented premises close to the Minshull Street warehouse. As it still had production facilities that were not being fully utilised owing to the decline in trade, Myles Cooper took over a shirting company called P. Clegg Shirting. This business enjoyed temporary success abroad, trading poplins with Ceylon, and in Britain, with the uniform trade. However, as new materials were developed in the 1960s, the shirting business also declined as the competition from polycotton and nylon fabrics proved too fierce.

As a result of this, Myles Cooper abandoned the cotton business completely. Stavert, Zigomala & Co. became an investment holdings firm and Myles Cooper bought Petco's Fine Furnishings in Ancoats, Manchester. The Cooper family is also still involved with the investment holdings side of Stavert, Zigomala.



For more information:

Read Wedderburn, Amy. *Stavert, Zigomala & Co: 1937 – 2002*. Unpublished research report, 2003. (Copy held in the information files in the Collections Centre Study Area).

Hear Interview with Roger Cooper, 07 February 2003 (Museum Oral History interview OH121)
Interview with Eric Duff, 07 February 2003 (Museum Oral History interview OH120)

Visit The Museum's Textiles Gallery